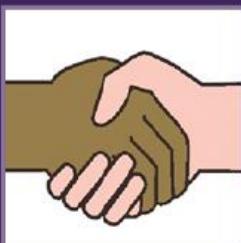


# **Peer Advocacy**

Advocacy  
in Slough



**A Guide to help  
Professionals develop  
Peer Advocacy in a  
Social Care or Health  
setting**

If you want more information after reading this pack  
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Advocacy Referrals Line:

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Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (SDPP) Lead Provider of Advocacy in Slough



# Introduction

This pack is provided by Advocacy in Slough and provides you with:

- Information about Peer Advocacy and how it can help in a social care or health setting
- Information to help you identify people who could be suitable to be a Peer Advocate in a social care or health setting
- Some useful information for Peer Advocates to learn from and use
- Information to help you set up a Peer Advocacy programme within your organisation

## What is Peer Advocacy?

Support to vulnerable adults can sometimes be given on a 1-1 basis or in a group by a Peer Advocate. This is someone who has the same disability or has experienced the same or a similar situation to those they are supporting. Peer Advocates use their experience to encourage, support and sometimes provide practical support to help others move forward in their lives and become stronger people.

Peer Advocates are able to Self-Advocate which means they:

- Understand about their rights
- Speak up for themselves
- Take control and make decisions about their own life
- Access the information they need

## Benefits of Peer Advocacy and how it can be used

Peer Advocacy can be a useful tool to help vulnerable people, particularly those using services in settings such as Care Homes, Supported Living, Day Centres, to share their experiences and address their issues. It encourages people to improve their ability to communicate which can help them take more control over their life, health and wellbeing.

If you are a provider of Services for vulnerable adults you will understand the need for those using your service to be able to say what's important/ troubling them so their problem/issues can be resolved. For various reasons, like lack of time, trust of others, lack of confidence, the 'voice' of users of services are not always heard.

Support from a Peer Advocate, either through 1-1 support or in a group setting can often help provide someone with the confidence to speak up and make decisions for themselves. We know from clients that have received 1-1 supported from a Professional Advocate that having an Advocate 'on their side' makes it so much easier for someone to cope with their issues and deal with difficulties in the future. See feedback below.

## Feedback 1

- I know you say that it's your job, but you make it more than 'just a job' The passion you have for helping people and the empathy you show towards people who are in desperate need of someone on their side is outstanding. You have brought me comfort when I felt things were just too much, you have made the others see that I am more than just a number. So, once again, huge gratitude and thanks to you,*

## Feedback 2

- Even though my situation is still ongoing, I just wanted you to know how grateful I am for everything you have done for me. You have gone that extra mile every time we have met and spoken and despite services always turning their back on us you have helped me by being a great, in fact, a huge help every step of this awful journey. I don't know what I would have done without you and your knowledge, kindness and strength, as this has helped us carry on. You are truly an ambassador for Slough Advocacy.*

## Step 1



**Tips - help to identify someone to be a Peer Support volunteer**

Potential Peer Advocates are likely to display the following:

- Empathy for others
- Likes to take part in group events
- Takes an interest in other people
- Is able to speak up for themselves
- Can ask for help and support when needed

Peer Advocates have 'lived experience' so may have the same disability or have experienced the same or a similar situation to those they are supporting.

### **Reminders:**

**Use the list above and think about which people could be recommended as Peer Advocates within your organisation**

## **Step 2**

### **Tips: Organising Peer Advocacy**

Peer Advocacy can be organised in different ways, for example:

- Peer Advocacy is often helpful for particular groups of people that have at least one thing in common such as those with mental health issues, learning difficulties, the elderly and whom have possibly experienced a number of the same things such as trauma, abuse, loneliness
- Peer Advocates can support other people on a 1-1 basis
- With agreement through discussions with the group and Peer Advocate it may be appropriate to have a facilitator, possibly a paid member of staff or volunteer who supports the Peer Advocate until they are confident to support the group themselves
- There may be an opportunity to have more than 1-1 Peer Advocate, enabling them to support one another in their role

## **Step 3**

### **Tips: What to consider before appointing a Facilitator**

Appointing a facilitator to support the Peer Advocate in group meetings may or may not be appropriate, it will depend on the views/abilities within the group and the Peer Advocate.

A facilitator's role will include responsibilities such as organising:

- Meeting venues, times, attendees
- Developing any documents needed such as
  - Confidentiality agreements between the group
    - Only share what you are comfortable with
    - Don't share personal information about others discussed in the group without asking
  - Ground rules for the group
    - Communication
      - Allow for everyone to have their say
      - Humour – only if it doesn't offend others
      - Listen to others
      - Express feelings without judgement
      - Respect others views
      - No bad language
      - Don't use abbreviations
    - Respect
      - Challenge the view, not the person
      - Respect individual boundaries
      - Promote a relaxed feeling in the group
      - Allow individuality and value diversity
    - Conduct
      - Take time out if you need it – allow people to leave the group
      - Challenge discriminatory or oppressive behaviour
      - Come up with a way to challenge disruptive behaviour
      - Resolve disagreements within the group
      - Timekeeping – be punctual when joining online meetings
  - Practically helping at a group meeting
  - Facilitating activities such as Ice breakers, and discussion topics happening in the group
  - Making sure everyone feels included
  - Helping to resolve any disagreements

## Step 4

**Tips: What to consider when communicating within the group**

- What are the aims of the group?
- Activities that will enable people to get to know one another better?
- What do others want to discuss?
- What happens with any outcomes from discussions?
- How to agree the aims of the Peer Advocacywithin the group?
- How comfortable do others feel about openly discussing subjects with others?
- Understanding what would make others feel comfortable talking in the group?
- Discussing shared and any common interests?
- Can anyone run particular activities?

## Step 5

**Useful information for the Peer Advocate to use when supporting others in a meeting**

## Communicating with others

The key to someone being able to obtain what they want and need is Communication.

Vulnerable people receiving services sometimes struggle to communicate to let others know what they think, feel, need and want. Examples of when people are likely to communicate with others:

- Face to face with someone
- In groups
- At meetings
- Letter
- Email
- Online

Improving someone's ability to communicate increases their chances of 'their voice being heard' and obtaining what they want and need.

It's important to let others know what you want and need, and the best way to communicate with others. For example, speaking without jargon, using text phone, email. Understanding that body language, such as a simple shake of the head can also communicate feelings.

Listening is an important skill. Listening well will help build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding and reduce frustration or distress.

Letting others know you don't understand something can sometimes be resolved by asking for the information to be explained again or in a different way. Repeating back what someone has said helps to make sure you understand.

#### **Reminders:**

- **Think about what you want to say**
- **Practice beforehand**
- **Keep it simple – focus on what's important to you**
- **Take your time**
- **Listen**
- **Ask again if you don't understand something**

#### **Goals and Time keeping**

When meeting someone or attending a meeting, knowing what you want your goal to be will increase your chances of 'being heard' and obtaining what you need.

Time keeping is also useful to focus on. It's not just about making sure you and others are on time. It is also knowing:

- How much time there is to discuss the issue
- How much time it will take to discuss each subject
- Working out if/when a break is needed during the meeting
- Do you need help keeping the discussion on track to avoid unnecessary conversation

#### **Reminders:**

- **What's your goal**
- **Time keeping**
- **Keeping things on track**

## Negotiation

Negotiation is about trying to get the best outcome for yourself or another person. It's about working with someone else, this could be someone who is delivering a service to agree what's possible and agreeable to both parties. Being able to negotiate can make the difference between achieving your goal and not achieving it.

Things which help when negotiating:

- Making a list of what you need/want, with the most important at the top
- Anything that can be changed or done differently
- The impact if it's not possible to get everything that's wanted
- Ask questions about things which are not clear
- If not everything can be agreed, what's acceptable offer and what's not
- Only agree if the offer is right

It's important to recognise that it's not always possible to achieve what's wanted in a negotiation.

### **Reminders:**

- **What's your goal**
- **What's an acceptable offer**
- **Only agree if the offer is right**

## Self Confidence and Assertiveness

When you are self-confident you trust in your own abilities, qualities, and judgement. Confident people behave in an 'Assertive' way which means they are able to put their point across without upsetting other people or getting upset themselves. This is very hard to do when there is something important to say that others may not agree with. Assertive people are able to:

- Give an opinion or say how they feel
- Ask for what they want or need
- Disagree respectfully
- Offer ideas and suggestions
- Say no without feeling guilty
- Speak up for someone else

It's very hard to control your emotions when there is something important to discuss with someone and you don't know whether they will agree. Keeping your emotions in check ensures that the focus is on what is said. Things that will help you are:

- Practise what you want to say with someone you trust, saying what you want, how you feel, saying no and that you disagree. Listening to someone else
- Keep what you say simple
- Keep calm yourself and remind others to keep calm
- Don't rush
- Let others speak without interrupting
- If you are feeling angry or upset ask to take a break

### **Reminders:**

- Practice what you want to say with someone you trust
- Listen to others
- Don't rush

## **Step 6**

**Useful information for  
when you have a meeting**

### **Information to help you if you are going to a meeting which is about you**

To be well prepared for a meeting it's helpful to find out:

- The purpose of the meeting
- Is there an agenda
- Who will be there
- How long will it last
- Is there any documentation that you need to read beforehand

Also:

- Know what your goal is
- What you want to say
- What you will and won't accept
- What information you need
- Have notes of what you want to say
- If you need someone supporting you at the meeting?

Remember any meeting about you, is your meeting. So it needs to be easy for you to understand, clear in what the results are and what you can expect next.

### **How to hold your own meeting**

To help you feel in control of your meeting and confident

- Ensure you invite the people you need to speak with to the meeting
- If someone you need to invite has upset you before, let them know and have someone with you who can support you should you get upset
- Meet where you are comfortable
- Make time for breaks
- Refer to your notes

### **Focus on**

- The most important things about the issue that need sorting out
- Use short sentences to explain the issue and avoid telling a long story

### **How to write notes**

Note taking can be a difficult skill to learn. If you write too much you might miss what else is being said, if you write too little information can be missed.

- The most important things about the issue that need sorting out
- Use short sentences to explain the issue and avoid telling a long story

Think about:

- Whether you need someone else to take the notes
- Use Headings
- Write in short sentences

### **Follow up from a meeting**

There may be things that need to be done by you, Professionals or others at the meeting, after the meeting has finished. These are called 'Actions'. If an action is given to someone to complete, it is their responsibility to complete it.

### **The Actions from the meeting**

They will be sent to all the people at the meeting and will show:

- Who is responsible for the action
- What the action is
- When it needs to be completed

## Reminders:

- Know who is invited to a meeting or who you want to invite
- Know what you want to say
- Have someone with you to support you if needed
- Be calm
- Follow up on any actions

## Step 7

Useful information for  
when you have a meeting

### Information to help you if you are going to a meeting which is about you

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- The purpose of the meeting
- Is there an agenda
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